

2 die in China factory blast

At least two people have died and four injured after an explosion at a chemical factory in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, local authorities said Tuesday.

The blast occurred at 9 a.m. at Lixin Chemical in Alashan League, Inner Mongolia, according to the local safety bureau.

No chemical leaks have been discovered.

An investigation is underway.

State research project dedicated to marine microplastics



Microplastics, which are small particles of plastic debris found in cosmetics and cleaning products like toothpastes, is viewed as a major environmental concern along with climate change, ozone depletion and ocean acidification.

A national key research project on microplastics was recently launched in Shanghai to assess their impact on the ecological environment, especially in the ocean.

Led by East China Normal University, the study will be conducted by several

college laboratories and research institutions in a time span from 2016 to late 2020 and aims to detect marine microplastics, establish research standards and monitoring procedures and develop ways to control their risks on the ecosystem.

Microplastics, which are small particles of plastic debris found in cosmetics and cleaning products like toothpastes, are too small to be captured through existing wastewater treatment processes and are washed straight into the oceans.

GESAMP (The Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection), an inter-agency body of the United Nations, listed microplastics as a mild killer whose harm is equal to marine garbage. In 2015, it was viewed as a major environmental concern along with climate change, ozone depletion and ocean acidification.

Due to its widespread presence in the oceans and potential harm to marine life, some countries have already rolled out countermeasures to deal with the increasing concern.

The US was the first country to announce that it would ban microbeads use in cosmetics; the European Commission is developing proposals to ban them in cosmetics across the EU, following calls from a number of member states. And the UK government has announced plans to ban microbeads use in related products by 2017.

Environmental agencies should tighten emissions of microplastics in different land- and sea-based activities, formulate stricter punishment measures for violations and accelerate legislation research on limiting the production and use of microplastics, said Professor Li Daoji, chief expert of the project.

Observers say the public also needs increased awareness of their potential harm to marine life and should refuse to buy cleansing products with polyethylene (PE), polypropylene (PP), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) and nylon.

Food officials to be tested on new law



[Photo/Shanghai Daily]

Food safety officials, along with staff of food production and sales companies, will be tested on the nation's new food safety law and city regulation, officials from Shanghai Food and Drug Administration said yesterday.

Government officials will be demoted if they fail the tests and companies will be scrutinized more frequently by the administration.

Shanghai's tough food safety regulation takes effect on March 20, and food companies have been told to train their staff about the new regulation.

Companies will be first warned – and then fined – if they fail to do the job. In serious instances, their licenses will be revoked.

Officials and staff from some 200 food companies, including those from high-risk companies like meat, dairy, raw aquatic food and infant food, received training from Shanghai FDA yesterday.

"We have a database of about 1000 questions about food safety law and regulation. They can do the tests on WeChat according to their convenience," said Chao Qiangguo, director of Shanghai FDA's food production department.

"Those involved in food industry must understand the regulations. If all the companies understand and follow the regulations, we can ensure safety," Chao said.

Wang Huimin from Shanghai Bright Dairy Co's quality department said food safety was the key issue for the food.

"We will organize training for all relevant staff and test them accordingly to make sure all of them have a clear understanding of the new regulation," he said.

There are some 200,000 food production and sales companies in the city. All of them have to brief and train their staff.

The bureau will test them at a later stage.

The new regulation carries a lifetime ban for operators convicted of food safety crimes and a five-year ban for those whose business licenses have been revoked.

Copyrights rise as awareness expands

China has set a new record for copyrights, processing more than 2 million new registrations last year, a rise of 22.3 percent compared with 2015, the National Copyright Administration of China said on Monday.

Nearly 1.6 million registrations were publications including literary works and photographs, while 407,774 were software, according to the administration.

The number of software copyright registrations has increased about 40 percent compared with 2015. More than 80 percent of the software works were registered in 10 cities in Guangdong province, along with Beijing and Shanghai.

China's copyright registrations have seen a steady, rapid rise. The number has increased about fourfold since 2011, when the number of copyright registrations was 570,000.

In 2013, China's copyright registrations hit what was then a record 1 million.

"The increase in copyright registrations shows the rise of people's copyright protection awareness," said Du Ying, a professor of intellectual property rights at Central University of Finance and Economics in Beijing. The State's strategy to promote copyright protection and innovation has created a positive environment for copyright, she added.

"Registration is used as concrete evidence when disputes arise," she said.

The vitality of China's cultural products market contributed to the rise, Du said.

Nanluoguxiang reopens to visitors

Nanluoguxiang, a popular pedestrian street in central Beijing known for its traditional culture. [Photo/Xinhua]

Some shops in Nanluoguxiang, a popular pedestrian street in central Beijing known for its traditional culture, reopened to visitors on Saturday after a two-month renovation project.

The total number of shops on the street has been reduced to 154 from 235, while programs for public interest such as a folk cultural center have been set up.

On May Day this year, the whole Nanluoguxiang will open to the public with a new look.

Nanluoguxiang is a narrow alley that is approximately 800m long, running from East Gulou Street in the north to Ping'an Street in the south. Built in the Yuan Dynasty, it is one of Beijing's oldest streets with a history of over 740 years.

At the beginning of last year, Nanluoguxiang was disqualified as a 3A level scenic spot. Its main street has been closed for construction from October 28. The renovated Nanluoguxiang features blue bricks, gray tiles and wooden doors, and embraces more shops with cultural elements to preserve the street's cultural charm.